

WASHINGTON, DC — Chairman Henry A. Waxman released the following statement today upon the release of new Centers for Disease Control (CDC) HIV incidence numbers.

“The HIV epidemic within our own borders is even worse than we had believed. This is a stark reminder of the importance of evidence-based HIV prevention programs. But under this Administration, HIV prevention has been underfunded and too often hindered by politics and ideology.

There are proven measures that change people’s behavior and reduce HIV transmission. As the total number of people with HIV in the United States has risen, so has the need for these programs.

But unbelievably, in recent years the HIV prevention budget has gone down. Since fiscal year 2002, when adjusted for inflation, CDC’s prevention budget has actually shrunk by 19%. The President has recently requested decreases in funding for HIV prevention at CDC.

So, even as the agency’s experts have identified a growing list of interventions that work, they’ve had less and less money to actually get these programs to the communities that need them. And they’ve had less money for crucial research for some of the highest-risk populations, like minority men who have sex with men.

In the meantime, this Administration has remained indefensibly dedicated to narrow abstinence-only programs, spending almost \$1.5 billion on an initiative that has not been shown to have any positive impact on health. We’ve seen accurate public health information on condoms removed from Administration websites, and multi-year delays in the dissemination of HIV prevention information to the community.

The Administration has also contradicted the science on needle exchange. There is strong public health consensus that needle exchange programs reduce the risk of HIV without increasing drug use. Unfortunately, we have a statutory ban on the use of federal funds for these programs. Instead of taking a lead on changing this unwise policy, some Administration officials have repeatedly criticized needle exchange programs and disseminated inaccurate

information about them.

Ideological interference like this should have no place in public health.

We know that HIV prevention does work. The tragedy is that despite this knowledge, our scientists, prevention experts and community leaders haven't been able to implement evidence-based prevention at funding levels high enough to really take on this disease.

We need to refocus on what works in HIV prevention. We need to move away from policies that hinder those efforts. And we need to understand how to best invest resources in this fight. When Congress returns in September, I will be holding a hearing to investigate these questions."